

JUST CAUSE

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Citizens Against UFO Secrecy

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EDITORIAL

"True science teaches us to doubt and to abstain from ignorance."
Claude Bernard

"In science (truth) is the only end."

William Whewell

"Nothing is more damaging to a new truth than an old error."

Johann Von Goethe

Why the quotes? There is much to be learned from them, particularly for a subject which so often beckons to science for validation. The UFO phenomena has always existed in a twilight zone between truth and fantasy. The only arbitration which most consistently works has been the use of the scientific method wielded by skilled practitioners sifting what constitutes quality information from what is lacking. To be sure, science is not always what scientists do, but proper application of principles and technique gives us truth that lasts. Even truth is subject to the time in which it exists; for example, Jupiter at one time had no ring. We now know that it does, based upon the discoveries by scientists operating the old Voyager space probe. Jupiter did not suddenly develop a ring because we sent the probe -- it was always there. It is just that we didn't know it until that moment. Truth might be defined therefore as the best possible explanation for a given set of conditions at a given time.

In scanning a typical science journal, one may always find new ideas or new discoveries being challenged by intense scrutiny and critique of scientific peers. This is not to be malicious, not to smear the integrity of the discoverer, nor to reflect the jealousy of one with rival notions (though again occasional contrary examples may be cited!). The only way to test the strength of a new truth is to question everything. To blindly accept whatever happens to be the latest new and sensational news without restraining one's initial enthusiasm can lead to dark consequences. The road to new ideas is littered with the skeletons of old ones. Truth will survive on the strength of it's rationality -- it's common sense. Remember these two words -- "common sense," two of the most important words in the English language. They define our future!

It is in this spirit that CAUS has raised challenges to new notions in the study of UFOs. UFO research is a wild subject that lacks intellectual discipline in it's broad presentation. Yet the debate over the subject's core premise, intelligent life in space, rivets us all and will continue despite the flaws of it's combatants.

ROBERT G. TODD
2528 Belmont Avenue
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June 21, 1994

SAF/AAZ
1720 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1720

ATTN: Colonel Richard L. Weaver
Director, Security and Special Program
Oversight

Dear Colonel Weaver:

During one of our conversations, you indicated that you had at least a passing familiarity with the claims made by the late Lewis S. "Bill" Rickett. As you know, Mr. Rickett was with the Army Air Forces (AAF) Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC) at the time of the Roswell incident, assigned to the CIC detachment at Roswell Army Air Field (RAAF). Later, when the AAF CIC was absorbed into the newly created Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), Rickett was transferred to AFOSI, but apparently remained at RAAF, which by then had been renamed Walker AFB. The AFOSI detachment at Walker AFB was attached to the 17th District OSI headquartered at Kirtland AFB, NM.

Based on the crashed-saucer proponents' presentations of Rickett's claims, it seems reasonable and fair to observe that Rickett's major contribution to the Roswell story centers around the alleged involvement of Dr. Lincoln LaPaz in the Roswell incident. In essence, Rickett claimed that Dr. LaPaz scoured the area surrounding the "crash" site for witnesses who saw the object while airborne. From UFO Crash at Roswell (page 119):

Rickett wasn't sure where the idea had come from but LaPaz had the various permissions and clearances to search the area. The CIC Headquarters ordered them to send someone and the senior man volunteered Rickett. He was told to pack his clothes and to take as long as was necessary. If he needed money, he was told to call. He was ordered to take care of LaPaz by driving him to the ranches, finding accommodations, and paying for the trip.

According to Rickett, he drew a staff car and they drove off, looking for the ranchers and the ranch hands who might have information to share. LaPaz had a topographical map and they used it to mark their progress, sometimes backtracking, talking to the old ranchers and cowboys who had never heard of flying saucers or flying discs and who rarely got into a town of more than two or three hundred people.

The activities Rickett attributed to LaPaz in connection with the Roswell incident seemed glaringly familiar to me. They mirror exactly the method LaPaz used in his failed attempts to locate fragments of the so-called "green fireballs" observed in New Mexico starting in December of 1948, less than two years after the Roswell incident occurred.

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Because the actions Rickett attributed to LaPaz in connection with the Roswell incident seemed suspiciously like those LaPaz took in connection with his green fireball investigations (circa 1948-1951), and because 17th District OSI was deeply involved in the green fireball inquiry (LaPaz reported to the Air Force through the 17th District), I purchased several rolls of Project Blue Book microfilm in what I thought would turn out to be a futile attempt to uncover a green fireball link between Rickett and LaPaz. In addition, the scenario depicted by the crashed-saucer proponents simply didn't make a lot of sense, since the most accurate way to determine the speed and trajectory of a crashed object -- no matter where or how many times it "crashed" -- would be through an examination of the crash site(s). It would have been ridiculously unnecessary to interview farmers, ranchers, and ranch hands, unless an attempt was being made to locate possible impact points, as was done in the green fireball investigations. With the Roswell incident, the impact point(s) was/were already known.

The Project Blue Book microfilm (Roll #88) contains many records dealing with the green fireball investigation, even though the green fireball inquiry was handled separately from the Blue Book inquiry, and had its own code name (Project "Twinkle"). Among the records is a copy of Dr. LaPaz's fourth report (Atch 1) to 17th District OSI, dated February 21, 1949. In his letter, Dr. LaPaz says:

At Roswell, where very effective cooperation was provided by the OSI group at Walker Air Force Base under Lt Paul Ryan, and the local CAP unit under Lt H. K. Cobean, Special Agent Bill Rickett was added to the survey party and gave much aid in the later work.

Further examination of the Blue Book microfilm turned up a "Report of Investigation," dated 11 February 1949 (Atch 2). The report concerns the investigation of a green fireball incident that occurred on 30 January 1949 in the vicinity of Walker AFB. Page 2 of the report says it "is a joint report of Special Agents JACK B. WILLIAMS, LEWIS S. RICKETT, and the writer [Lt. Ryan]." The report says (page 1) that "an almost house-to-house search was conducted East of Roswell by OSI and Dr. LINCOLN LA PAZ of the University of New Mexico for all possible witnesses." The report (page 2) refers to an aerial and ground search conducted in the vicinity of Lamesa, Texas, for physical evidence, with negative results. Perhaps most interesting of all, the report says (page 3) that:

Special Agent RICKETT continued this search throughout Southeast New Mexico and West Texas from 1400 hours, 2 February 1949, to 2400 hours, 5 February 1949, in the company of Dr. LINCOLN LA PAS of the University of New Mexico. All information obtained during this part of the investigation was retained by Dr. LA PAZ and will be incorporated into his report to OSI.

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Compare the above quote to the following from page 121 of UFO Crash at Roswell:

Rickett wrote an informal report about what he and LaPaz had seen and done. LaPaz, on the other hand, was required to submit an official report. Everything went to Kirtland and then to Washington.

Generally speaking, the 11 February 1949 "Report of Investigation" furnishes a detailed accounting of an exhaustive green fireball investigation in which both Special Agent Rickett and Dr. LaPaz participated. Moreover, the activities attributed to Dr. LaPaz in the report bear an uncanny resemblance to the activities attributed to LaPaz by Rickett in connection with the Roswell incident. Since the report deals with a green fireball incident that occurred in the vicinity of Walker AFB (formerly Roswell Army Air Field), somebody should have asked Rickett which Roswell incident he was talking about.

Clearly, more than four decades after these events occurred, Rickett -- like other Roswell witnesses -- was confused, and mistook the green fireball investigation for the Roswell investigation. This conclusion is supported by the obvious fact that, of the hundreds of alleged Roswell witnesses interviewed by the crashed-saucer proponents, the only one to link Dr. LaPaz to the Roswell incident was Lewis S. "Bill" Rickett. Or has another witness come forward to confirm Rickett's questionable recollections?

The December 1993 edition of the Fund for UFO Research's (FUFOR) "The Roswell Events," prepared by Fred Whiting and apparently intended as a "revised and updated" version of the Fund's "Congressional Briefing," reveals details of another former AFOSI special agent who allegedly confirmed Dr. LaPaz's involvement in the Roswell incident. From page 28:

A former Air Force Office of Special Investigations agent, Earl L. Zimmerman, recently disclosed that, in 1949, LaPaz told him of his involvement in the Roswell case. "He did not discuss the case in any detail," says Zimmerman, "but he did say he went out with two agents and interviewed sheepherders, ranchers, and others. They told these witnesses they were investigating an aircraft accident. I seem to recall LaPaz also saying they found an area where the surface of the earth had been turned a light blue and wondering if lightening could cause such an effect."

Zimmerman had been stationed at RAAF in 1947, where he served as a bartender in the base officers' club. "During the summer of 1947, I heard many rumors about flying saucers in the club and around the base, including something about investigating the discovery of one under the guise of a plane crash investigation," he says. "At about this time, I saw Eighth Air Force commander General Roger Ramey in the O club more

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than once. On a couple of occasions, he had Charles Lindbergh with him, and I heard they were on the base because of the flying saucer business.

Fortunately, Mr. Whiting helps put Zimmerman's testimony into perspective on page 54 by saying:

Earl L. Zimmerman was stationed at RAAF in July 1947 and was transferred to the Office of Special Investigations at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. There, he worked with Dr. Lincoln LaPaz of the University of New Mexico on an extended research project. Dr. LaPaz told Zimmerman that "he had been involved in the investigation of the thing found in the Roswell area," and that he and his team told witnesses they were investigating an aircraft accident. LaPaz also described an area where the surface of the earth had been turned a light blue.

Mr. Zimmerman's signed affidavit (Atch 3) accompanies the Fund's briefing and furnishes additional information to help place Zimmerman's testimony into proper context:

(7) In early 1949, after being transferred to OSI in Albuquerque, I worked with Dr. Lincoln LaPaz of the University of New Mexico on an extended project at the university's research station on top of Sandia Peak. We were told the Air Force was concerned about "something" being in the night sky over Los Alamos, and we took 15-minute exposures of the sky with a four by five Speed Graphic camera. We worked in three-man, one-week shifts, and Dr. LaPaz was in charge.

(8) During this project, which lasted for several months, I got to know Dr. LaPaz very well. When I mentioned to him I had been stationed in Roswell during 1947, he told me he had been involved in the investigation of the thing found in the Roswell area that summer. He did not discuss the case in any detail, but he did say he went out with two agents and interviewed sheepherders, ranchers, and others. They told these witnesses they were investigating an aircraft accident. I seem to recall LaPaz also saying they found an area where the surface of the earth had been turned a light blue and wondering if lightening could cause such an effect.

On the surface, Zimmerman's statements would seem to be confirmation of LaPaz's involvement in the Roswell incident. As in the case of Rickett's statements, however, Zimmerman's statements suggested that his involvement with Dr. LaPaz centered around the green fireball investigation. So I went back and examined the Blue Book records to see if they could shed any more light on Zimmerman's statements.

One Blue Book document, a letter (Atch 4) dated 17 May 1949, from the commanding officer of 17th District OSI to higher headquarters, reports that District

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17 had "established a temporary visual and photographic observation post, located northeast of Albuquerque, New Mexico, on the crest of the Sandia Mountains. At present this post is equipped with one (1) wide angle lens camera, 8 x 10 film, fitted with a spectographic [sic] grating, and manned twenty-four hours daily by 17th District personnel." According to the document,

This post was set up in view of suggestions made by Dr. Joseph Kaplan, UCLA, and a member of the scientific advisory board, USAF, during his recent visit to this district headquarters. Dr. Kaplan suggested that if possible, it would be advisable to establish such a photographic installation.

Further review of the Blue Book records revealed another document (Atch 5) which says that Dr. Kaplan visited 17th District headquarters on 27 and 28 April 1949, at which time apparently Dr. Kaplan and Dr. LaPaz made the recommendation for the establishment of the photographic observation post. This was undoubtedly the observation post to which Mr. Zimmerman had been assigned, and it was established because of the green fireball investigation.

So we have Mr. Zimmerman being assigned to Dr. LaPaz's observation post sometime between 27 April, the date of Dr. Kaplan's visit, and 12 May, the date the District 17 commander reported the establishment of the observation post to higher headquarters.

Dr. LaPaz and Mr. Zimmerman are at the observation post for an extended period of time, looking for green fireballs and other aerial phenomena. During this period, Zimmerman reveals to LaPaz that he had been stationed at Walker AFB, apparently as late as early 1949 when he was transferred to Kirtland AFB and OSI. At this point, LaPaz allegedly reveals to Zimmerman that "he had been involved in the investigation of the thing found in the Roswell area that summer."

Ignoring the "that summer" part of Zimmerman's statement, we are entitled to ask, Which Roswell incident was LaPaz referring to? Was he referring to the crash of the alien spacecraft on the Foster Ranch in July of 1947? Or was he really referring to the green fireball incident that occurred in the vicinity of Walker AFB just three months previously, which resulted in an exhaustive search throughout Southeast New Mexico and West Texas? Human nature being what it is, the most likely answer is that LaPaz was referring to the more recent incident that occurred near Walker AFB, from which Zimmerman had recently been transferred.

I addressed my questions to Mr. Zimmerman, and he confirmed (Atch 6) that the observation post was set up to photograph green fireballs and other aerial phenomena. In a follow-up letter, I informed Mr. Zimmerman of what I had learned from the Blue Book files about the establishment of the observation

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post, and told Mr. Zimmerman about Dr. LaPaz's investigation of the green fireball incident that occurred near Walker AFB on 30 January 1949. I asked Mr. Zimmerman if it was possible that Dr. LaPaz had been speaking of the more recent incident (the 30 January 1949 event), rather than the July 1947 event. In response (Atch 7), Mr. Zimmerman stated that he "cannot truly say which green fireball he [LaPaz] was chasing at any given time," which is perfectly understandable given the number of years that have passed since these events occurred.

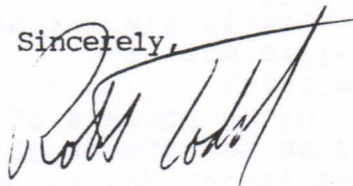
As a result, it must be concluded that, if Dr. LaPaz said anything to Mr. Zimmerman about any Roswell incident, most likely he was referring to the more recent event that occurred on 30 January 1949 in the vicinity of Walker AFB, an incident that resulted in an impressive search for physical evidence.

This, I believe, is the best interpretation of the circumstances surrounding the alleged involvement of Dr. LaPaz in the "Roswell incident." I further believe that any rational person will agree with this interpretation.

It is also interesting to note that, of all the various teams of Roswell investigators (first Moore and Friedman; then Schmitt and Randle; and then Friedman and Berliner), only one team (Friedman and Berliner) even mentions LaPaz's involvement in the green fireball investigations, and then they only mention it very briefly in passing. Dr. LaPaz's involvement in the green fireball investigations is conspicuous by its absence, and I have to wonder if some of the Roswell investigators don't already know about the facts related above, and never mention LaPaz's involvement in the green fireball investigations for fear of drawing attention to the Blue Book files as outlined above. As important as what the crashed-saucer proponents put into their published writings is what they leave out.

The crashed-saucer proponents rely heavily on scuttlebutt, innuendo, inference, distortions, and sometimes outright deception to make their case against the Air Force. If they were making these accusations against an individual, they would be sued into oblivion.

Sincerely,



7 Atchs

1. LaPaz ltr, Feb 21, 1949
2. Rpt of Investigation, 11 Feb 1949
3. Zimmerman Affidavit, Nov 2, 1993
4. 17 DO/OSI ltr, 17 May 1949
5. 17 DO/OSI ltr, 12 May 1949
6. Zimmerman ltr, Jan 14, 1994, w/Atch
7. Zimmerman ltr, Mar 28, 1994

Postscript

The preceeding letter was sent to the Air Force commenting on one aspect of claims related to the alleged 1947 Roswell UFO crash.

Robert Todd has been an independent investigator of government UFO interest for a great many years. CAUS has always found his research to be a consistently vital link in the understanding of what the government knows about UFOs. There are few other sources to turn to for a correct interpretation of historical events as Todd has been able to do.

The validity of any crashed saucer claim hinges on the strength of it's parts. If a part shows serious weakness, it should be removed from the debate until such weakness is either corrected, or, if it doesn't resist scrutiny, cast aside. The issue of Lincoln La Paz's involvement in Roswell was never strong but Todd's questioning reveals it now to be seriously flawed. Comments are invited. Attachments mentioned in the letter are on file at CAUS (too many to publish) and the 17 pages are available for \$3 to cover copy and postage costs.

CBS UFO FILM SURFACES

Thanks to the effort of UFO researcher John Stewart of the UFO Video Coordinator Library in Randolph, New Jersey, CAUS has been provided with a copy of "UFO: FRIEND, FOE OR FANTASY," aired on the CBS television network in May 1966. The documentary was aired as a response to the great wave of UFO incidents during March and April 1966, the so-called "Swamp Gas" wave. The program has not been shown for twenty-eight years and is a piece of priceless, vintage UFO history, displaying young versions of Walter Cronkite, Carl Sagan, Thornton Page and many other figures of the past. Stewart may be contacted to answer questions at: 168 West Hanover Ave.; Randolph, New Jersey 07869.

THE MANTELL UFO - A SMOKING GUN? MAYBE! PART TWO

In our last number, the basics of the famous UFO encounter involving Captain Thomas Mantell on January 7, 1948 were given. Also published were two photographs of a Skyhook balloon launched from Camp Ripley, Minnesota, located near the town of Little Falls. The photos were kindly provided by Professor Charles Moore, one of a team of researchers performing balloon-borne scientific experiments during the 1947-49 period.

What those photographs show (and others are included with this article) is what is very likely the same object that Mantell saw, and ultimately lost his life pursuing.

How do we know this?

In late 1992, in the process of doing other work, researcher Robert Todd received an assortment of photographs of various balloon launch scenes from Professor Moore. The images contained date notations on the back, some labeled "1-6-48." Todd had recognized that the date was only a day before that of the Mantell incident. Given that most researchers now feel that Mantell had pursued a balloon, the only persistent mystery was from where the balloon had come. Todd contacted this editor and provided Moore's phone number.

I spoke to Professor Moore in January 1994 by phone and, consequently, additional photos were made available, thirty-seven relating to the January 6, 1948 launch from Camp Ripley.

Circumstances of the launch: The balloon's purpose was to hoist a cosmic ray experiment into the stratosphere, part of a series of such

experiments during that time. The instrument package hung below an unpacked parachute, both of which were attached to the lower portion of the balloon. Upon the triggering of a clock timer, the instrument package would be released later and float to earth by means of the parachute. This particular experiment malfunctioned due to the timer not releasing the package, and presumably was lost after passing off the east coast near the Georgia/South Carolina area.

It was launched at about 8 AM on January 6th. Temperature at the time was about -45F. After an earlier burst of polar air, the launch site was under a dome of high pressure with winds from the north creating a drift to the south and southeast. When airborne, the Skyhook drifted southeast, confirmed by theodolite tracking (a tracking telescope for those unfamiliar). Sometime subsequent to the balloon drifting over the horizon, Moore recalled that radio reports of a flying object over Illinois were monitored. Hours later reports over Kentucky and Tennessee were received. Such a drift pattern would indeed have carried the balloon to the Georgia/South Carolina region. Apparently, aside from the radio reports, no published reports outside of the Kentucky/Tennessee area are available. The Air Force's Project Sign (predecessor to Blue Book) lists four cases on January 7th: Mantell's; Lockbourne AFB, Ohio; Columbus, Ohio; and Wilmington, Ohio. Mantell's was officially explained as a balloon, after the planet Venus was initially considered and discarded, while the others were listed as Venus.

Former Project Blue Book head Captain Edward Ruppelt, in his 1956 book THE REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECTS, opts for a balloon having been launched from Clinton County Air Force Base in southern Ohio. Weather data available to Ruppelt suggested that a Skyhook balloon launched from Clinton County would account for the various changes in direction reported by witnesses in Kentucky as the supposed balloon ascended through layers of atmosphere and changeable wind direction. Ruppelt added that people who were working on Skyhook projects remembered operating out of Clinton County in 1947 but could not confirm a January 7, 1948 flight.

Professor Moore, who did work on early Skyhook projects, absolutely ruled out Clinton County AFB as a launch site for the January 7th balloon, saying that "...the first 'Skyhook-type' balloon launch ever from Clinton County airport occurred on July 9, 1951. The first flights from that site were made in the summer of 1951 by members of the New York University Balloon Group under Air Force Contract AF 19(122)-633 and are described in New York University Research Division Technical Report 172.1 dated October 15, 1951. I can state with assurance that no large polyethylene balloons were ever launched from Clinton County prior to 1951."

With the time lag between the Camp Ripley launch at 8 AM, January 6th and the first reports from Kentucky at 1 PM, January 7th being 29 hours, and factoring in an average drift speed of 18 - 25 MPH, a balloon could easily have covered the approximately 700 - 750 miles from Camp Ripley to northwestern and central Kentucky. Moore added that in 1952, he once flew in a manned balloon averaging 7000 feet altitude from New Brighton, Minnesota to near Staten Island, New York in 23 hours.

It is not unreasonable now to place a known balloon in the vicinity of Kentucky on January 7, 1948. The following is a chronology of major events on this date, based upon the Project Sign record:

January 7th, PM -

- 100 CST - Civilians call to report a UFO overhead from various locations in northwestern Kentucky. Madisonville has it flying overhead. Seen at Elizabethtown also.
- 110 CST - Seen at Lexington. Another report has the object moving west, south of Ft. Knox.

- 120 CST - Godman Tower informed. Other sightings reported west of Ft. Knox, near Irvington and Owensboro.
- 145 CST - Godman personnel see object in the southwest, looking like a small white object similar to a parachute, bright on top, reddish on the lower portion. Another witness says the object is round, whiter than the clouds of which the object passed in front at times. Another still called it an ice cream cone topped with red. Another: white like an umbrella, red light on top and bottom sometimes. Stationary 1½ hours.
- 245 CST - Mantell, told to look for the object during a routine flight, sees it. He said it was ahead and above, moving at 180 MPH. Godman said that the object dwarfed the size of the pursuing planes, two other P-51s having accompanied Mantell's for a time. Soon after, Mantell felt that the object equalled or exceeded his speed. Chase continued.
- 318 CST - Mantell crashed and was killed.
- 320 CST - Third shift takes over at Godman Tower. They are told that a disc, balloon or strange object was being hunted down.
- 405 CST - Mantell's wing pilots, Clements and Hammond, take off again after refueling to look for Mantell, not knowing that he had crashed. After having reached the Bowling Green, Kentucky area where Mantell was last seen, there was no sign of the UFO.
- 430 CST - A Vanderbilt University astronomer sees an object near Nashville, Tennessee, south-southeast of the city.

If one plots a general trend of the UFO's flight path, you will surely see a southeast drift, agreeing with the Camp Ripley Skyhook's trend of travel. What of the object's movement west at 110 CST? A contradiction unless one considers localized changes in wind direction for a time, or an incorrect report by a witness. Complete weather and tracking data for the Camp Ripley launch are not available for the entire path.

The object being stationary at 145 CST for 1½ hours again might be explained as localized variations in drift over certain areas. Professor Moore explained as an example that in the summertime an area between 60,000 and 75,000 feet sometimes develops, called the "turnaround altitude," a region in which there is no wind. The stationary observation at this time would also appear to be contradicted by Mantell's testimony at 245 that the object was moving at 180 MPH. Clearly some of the testimony by witnesses is contradictory and the truth lies somewhere in between. We must allow that a portion of the speed/direction estimates may be in error.

A tell-tale indication that the Skyhook was in the vicinity when Mantell crashed comes from Project Sign records:

"...a Dr. Seyfert, an astronomer at Vanderbilt University, had spotted an object south-southeast of Nashville, Tennessee, that he identified as a pear-shaped balloon with cables and a basket attached, moving SSE at a speed of 10 MPH at 25,000 feet. This was between 1630-1645 (430-445 PM - ed.)."

This would have put the object roughly 30 - 40 miles south-southeast beyond the estimated point where Mantell was last seen. Given the 110-125 PM time difference between the crash and the continuation of the southeast drift another 30-40 miles in an area south-southeast of Nashville, the object would have been doing roughly 25 MPH, agreeing with the estimated drift speed range of 18-25 MPH given earlier to place the Camp Ripley balloon in the Kentucky area.

Even a superficial look at the Skyhook photo accompanying this article reveals a very similar object to Dr. Seyfert's description of his object (see page 12 for photo). One witness in Madisonville, according to Ruppelt (page 37), called Flight Service in Dayton, Ohio, to say that he had seen an object traveling southeast and upon looking at it through a telescope, saw that it was a balloon.

Sightings in Ohio several hours later appear to have no relation to the Skyhook since 1) the balloon would have to have entirely reversed direction to be in southern Ohio at 730 PM, the time of initial sightings at Lockbourne Air Force Base and Clinton County Air Force Base, and 2) at 730 PM on a January evening, even at high altitude, a balloon should not have been brightly illuminated by reflected light to the extent reported by personnel at both bases. A balloon at 100,000 feet, for example, can be brightly illuminated for approximately 30 minutes after sunset. On this day the sun set at 450 PM locally, some two hours and forty minutes before the evening sightings.

If one still continues to even remotely believe that Ruppelt's explanation is correct, that a Clinton County Skyhook was launched, then one is hard pressed to explain why personnel from there 1) didn't know that their balloon was responsible for raising hell over Kentucky and 2) were so alarmed by UFO sightings in the evening if launched Skyhooks were still in the vicinity, or why no mention of such launches appear in any of the Clinton County witnesses' statements. Assuming that the witnesses were well aware of the classified nature of the Skyhook program, if you grant Clinton County launches, then why would they report anything at all and draw outside attention to the program? This is engaging in a bit of overkill on the Clinton County matter, but it draws attention to the curious support for this scenario by Ruppelt.

Professor Moore recalled that in a meeting with Ruppelt at General Mills, Ruppelt felt that one of the Camp Ripley launches was responsible for the Mantell encounter. If so, then why did Ruppelt, in his 1956 book, proceed to so strongly support a Clinton County launch? This support, when read carefully does not seem to be based upon very much substance.

The answer may lie in the fact that the Navy, which funded and directed the Skyhook program, did not want to be held responsible for Mantell's death and, subsequently, suppressed knowledge of the Camp Ripley balloon, according to Professor Moore who was a participant in the discussion of this matter with the Navy. This would explain not only short-term suppression of the truth but long-term as well since even though the Skyhook program was eventually declassified, Mantell's accidentally death as a result of a Skyhook encounter certainly would do little to comfort Mantell's family knowing that one was responsible for the events leading to his loss. Further, even though the revelation that a Skyhook balloon was connected to the incident would have helped the government's effort to downgrade UFOs to the public, the idea that an initial suppression did take place could have aroused unwanted suspicions that the government indeed was not always forthcoming with it's UFO statements. The matter was left alone.

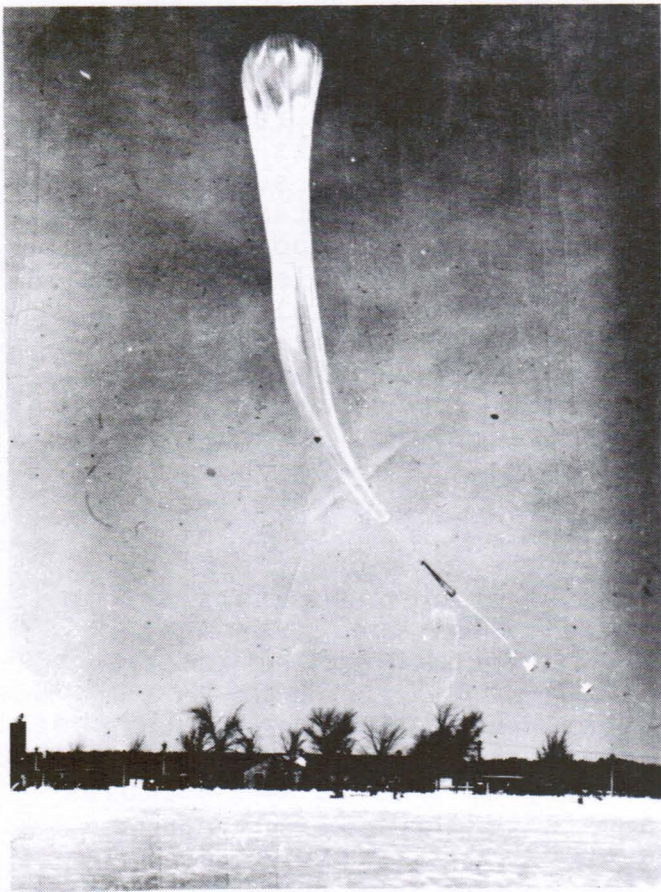
It seems unlikely that much new information will be added to this story hereon, so unless dramatic evidence appears to the contrary, CAUS regards the Camp Ripley Skyhook launch of January 6, 1948 as the stimulus for the circumstances that led to Mantell's unfortunate accident, an accident which Mantell could have prevented by exercising proper caution in climbing to dangerous altitudes without the appropriate equipment. It seems certain that Mantell, taken with the possibility of witnessing a strange flying object, exceeded his limitations.

As a final note on the Mantell story, Professor Moore provided specifics on the January 6th Skyhook:

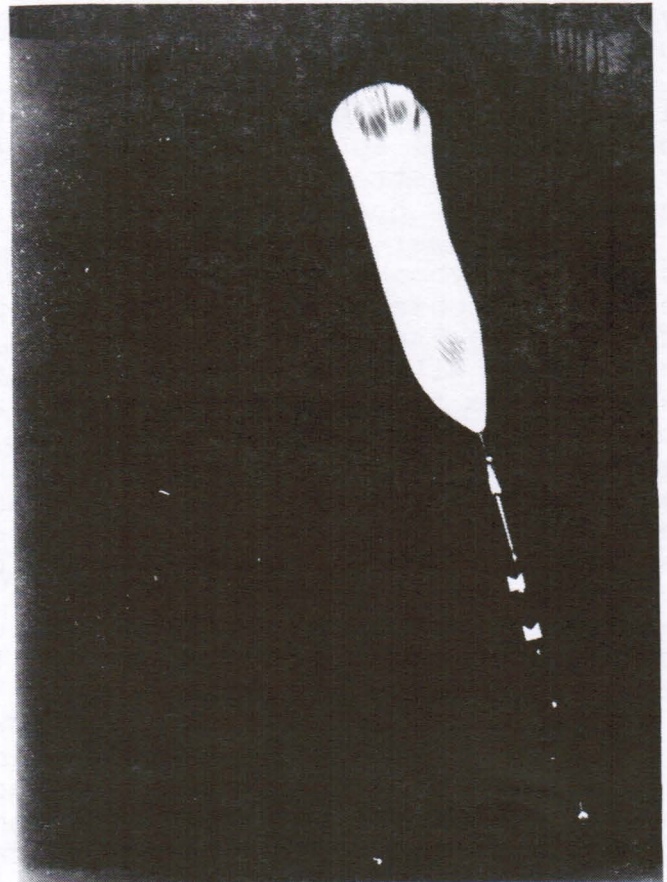
The balloon fully inflated: "Nominally 72.8 feet in diameter by about 102 feet high with volume of about 226,000 cubic feet. It carried 80 pound loads to an altitude of 100,000 feet where it became fully inflated and, thereafter, vented the excess lifting gas out its 'appendix,' an opening in the bottom."

CAUS wondered if at the 25,000 foot altitude the balloon would have been fully inflated at any point. Reports from Kentucky describe "parachute" or "cone-shaped" objects, implying that the balloon would not have been fully inflated as it passed over these areas. Yet, other reports from these areas described "round" objects. Moore explained, "On descent from high altitude it could have 'ingested' air through the appendix. This often happened and prolonged the duration of the flight because the ingested air would be compressed on descent which would cause the temperature of the air to increase thereby adding to the buoyancy until the compression heat was lost by radiation and convection. I do not know if this happened on the January 6, 1948 Skyhook but, in view of the apparent long flight, some air intake probably occurred."

(letter to CAUS, 7-21-94)



The January 6, 1948 Skyhook launch, shortly after release.



Another viewpoint.